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## **Beyond Memory Wars: The *Indigènes de la République*'s Grass-Roots**

### **Anti-Racism between the Memory of Colonialism and Antisemitism**

#### **Abstract**

In the mid-2010s, the expression ‘memory wars’, which had been coined in debates about the role of different commemorations of France’s colonial history, became increasingly identified with an atmosphere of conflict between France’s Jewish population and other minority communities. Simultaneously, conflicts over remembrance of the Holocaust and France’s colonial past characterised a new dynamic of memorial anti-racism, which was often characterised by the organisation *Les Indigènes de la République*. By examining the trajectory of this association and its role in the gestation of a memorial conflict, this article provides a new understanding of memory debates ‘from below’. Through oral history interviews as well as the organisation’s publications and media appearances, this article outlines the role of memory in the growing atmosphere of conflict between Jews and other postcolonial minorities in France and ultimately questions the role of so-called memory wars in the growing conversation about race in the Fifth Republic.

#### **Article**

After the events of 2005, as a series of controversies brought the issue of ‘colonial memory’ to the forefront of the French public and political conversation, a new term was coined: ‘*guerres de mémoire*’, or memory wars. It aimed to name and criticise a new development in which representatives of minority groups tried to assert the superiority of their community’s memory narrative against narratives of other communities. Benjamin Stora, the historian most responsible for the broad dissemination of this expression, was particularly baffled by this change. The historian-cum-activist had previously perceived his role as leading a battle to ‘break the silence’ that surrounded France’s misdeeds in Algeria. Since the early 1990s, his

writings and TV documentaries called on French society to confront the dark stains of its colonial past in order to ‘heal the gaping wounds’ that plagued it. Yet these so-called memory wars suggested that Stora’s paradigm, in which historians’ unearthing of painful memories inevitably led to social reconciliation, might have been slightly too optimistic. On the one hand, the prioritisation of memory did not solve problems of racism to create a peaceful society. On the other, these conflicts reflected the growth of memory activism, where anti-racist activists harnessed the memory of colonialism for their own purposes and did not always respect historians’ expertise in the process. Furthermore, while the term ‘memory wars’ was supposed to pertain to inter-community strife between Maghrebi communities, African-heritage communities, harkis and *pieds-noirs*,<sup>1</sup> the term came to be employed ever more often to describe how racialised minorities in France challenged what they perceived as a Republican ‘memory primacy’ of the Holocaust in France.

This article examines this particular conflict, or the way memorial activism that focused on colonial history engaged with France’s Jewish community and antisemitism. It does so by exploring the trajectory of the *Indigènes de la République*, an organisation that was particularly identified with this kind of memorial anti-racism. Through oral history interviews as well as the organisation’s publications and media appearances, this article outlines the role of memory in the growing atmosphere of conflict between Jews and other postcolonial minorities in France and ultimately questions the role of so-called memory wars in the growing conversation about race in the Fifth Republic. Specifically, the *Indigènes*’ focus on its goal to represent the voice of France’s racialised (and colonised) minorities provides a scope for analysing the catch-all term ‘memory wars’ from below. This article therefore examines the organisation’s trajectory, which aimed to turn academic preoccupation with the subaltern into a tangible form of anti-racist activism, as a way of exploring grassroots actors’ motivations in mobilising the memory of colonialism in France. While the memory debate in

France often focused on the failings of the republic to ‘come to terms’ with its colonial past, actors in this nascent debate, and particularly the *Indigènes de la République*, approached the republic as self-proclaimed representatives of voices ‘from below’ that claimed a legacy of colonial resistance.

Furthermore, this article’s examination of so-called memory wars through the voices of their protagonists tries to provide a new angle to scholarship on the politicisation of memory. It urges to go beyond Michael Rothberg’s influential *Multidirectional Memories*, which contends that social memory conflicts can be overcome through a ‘positive’ cross-fertilisation of memory between different groups of victims.<sup>2</sup> While this article examines the relationship between various memory groups, it also suggests Rothberg’s normative division between ‘true multidirectionality’, which leads to greater social justice, and other kinds of ‘negative’ memory, is unhelpful in the examination of memory as a public, political process. The present article’s focus on the *Indigènes*’ position within a social conflict about memory aims, on the contrary, to address memory activism as one element in a changing political understanding of France as a postcolonial, multi-ethnic polity.

Lastly, this article’s main preoccupation is with the role of activists ‘from below’ in initiating a conversation about race in the Fifth Republic, continuing earlier exploration of the role of memory vocabulary to bypass the republican barrier of supposed ‘colour blindness’ and thematise a hitherto ‘unrepublican’ notion of race.<sup>3</sup> In so doing, it takes a novel approach to the study of memory conflicts through attention to the agency of one of its main actors. Rather than seeing conflicts inherent in memory debates as anomalies in a process that is aimed at national reconciliation,<sup>4</sup> this piece demonstrates that they are a part of a contradictory and non-linear negotiation of race in 21<sup>st</sup>-century France.

### ***First Intersections between Jewish Memory and the Memory of Colonialism***

Initially, the movement to acknowledge France's colonial history did not oppose the Jewish community's struggle to recognise France's responsibility for the fate of French Jews in the Holocaust.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the Jewish success paved the way for greater attention to other groups' narratives.<sup>6</sup> Fighting for recognition of France's Vichy past became, in some cases, a way for activists to explore other oppressions, as figures on the traditional French Left discovered the importance of 'coming to terms' with France's colonial past through the activism of the 1980s. This included figures like the journalist Anne Tristan, who began her political trajectory fighting the rise of the *Front national* and supporting 'facing up to the crimes of Vichy' in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> She later became an instrumental figure in the early 1990s by drawing attention to the importance of commemorating the massacre of Algerians in Paris on 17 October 1961. Here in particular, the Papon Trial in 1998 was seen as the epitome of such links, as the prosecution used the public exposure of the trial to highlight Papon's role in the deportation of Jewish children from the Gironde as well as in the brutal oppression of a peaceful Algerian demonstration in Paris in 1961.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Maurice Papon became a living example of the continuity between Vichy and the Algerian War of Independence.

Nonetheless, the story in which activists transitioned from protesting France's role in the Second World War to demanding to break the silence on the excesses of decolonisation was largely limited to the traditional, white French Left. Activists who represented racialised communities did not actively participate in the Jewish struggle to commemorate the Shoah but were simultaneously inspired by Jewish success both on the level of discourse and in achieving tangible results. First, the focus on the state's acknowledgement of the Jewish narrative produced a change of vocabulary, most notably the invention of the term *devoir de mémoire*, or 'duty of memory'.<sup>9</sup> This term entered the public conversation in the 1970s to designate the Republic's responsibility towards the memory of its Jewish community, and as of 1992 it penetrated the country's official political discourse. It demonstrated a new desire to

include the memory of, in the words of Serge Barcellini, those ‘dead because of France’ into the national narrative.<sup>10</sup> Second, by the end of the 1990s, Jewish struggles had resulted in a series of political achievements. These included the construction of memorials, the turn to the courts through the appropriation of the term ‘crime against humanity’ to prosecute old Vichy collaborators, Jacques Chirac’s speech of admission of the Republic’s responsibility for the fate of its Jews<sup>11</sup> and lastly, the turn to legislation in the form of the Gayssot Law that singled out Holocaust denial as a crime.<sup>12</sup> These achievements became markers of success for activists who represented other communities. They quickly appropriated these as a blueprint for minority communities to establish a voice within France’s Republican narrative.

The most notable case of such inspiration was the Antillean community’s struggle to politicise the memory of colonial slavery in France. The defining moment in this process was the mobilisation of the Antillean community in Paris to protest against the commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> abolition of slavery in 1998 and its programme that equated the birth of the Republic with white abolitionism. These protests were the fruit of the work of the association Bwafuyé, which was founded by the couple Serge and Viviane Romana, two former Guadeloupian *indépendentists* based in Paris. Their transition from activism aimed at independence from France to community organisation that prioritised the memory of slavery was inspired by the Jewish experience.<sup>13</sup> In particular, the psychiatrist Viviane Romana emulated the work of Jewish colleagues who had explored the role of trauma in articulating identities for younger generations. Romana contended that Antilleans needed to follow the Jewish ‘blueprint’ of asserting painful memory to define their belonging in France. As a result, the new organisation’s goals focused on harnessing the history of slavery to reassess the historical bond between Antilleans and the Republic.

Caribbean activism that aimed to commemorate colonial slavery quickly adopted the methods of Jewish activists. After the 1998 protests, Antillean politicians began a process that

culminated in the ratification of the Taubira Law in 2001, which recognised Transatlantic Slavery as a crime against humanity and called on school curricula to give it ‘the place it deserves’.<sup>14</sup> The legislative process demonstrated that Antillean activists and politicians were aware of Jewish activists’ actions, if not directly inspired by it. Most notably, the then newly elected Guyanese MP Christiane Taubira later admitted in an interview she had harnessed the concept of *devoir de mémoire*, which in that period was still mainly used to speak of the Holocaust, in debates about the law because she realised that it had won wide recognition and could be used to gain support for the commemoration of slavery. Taubira’s success was therefore based directly on the continued use of commemorative vocabulary, but it simultaneously embraced the legal vocabulary of ‘crime against humanity’ and made use of the Gayssot Law’s precedent of moral – and memorial – legislation.

However, the overriding sense of memorial cross-community inspiration – if not cooperation – did not last. Quickly after the triumph of the Taubira Law, the juxtaposition of the emerging public attention to the memory of slavery and the now established – if recent – official embrace of the memory of the Holocaust became a new battleground in what pundits and scholars soon denounced as a ‘competition of victims’ and ‘memory wars’.<sup>15</sup> While the political focus on this so-called ‘discourse of victimhood’ is problematic at best, it changed the way activists and other actors in the public sphere treated the role of memory in shaping France’s inter-community relations. The most notorious opening shot in this process was provided by what later became known as the ‘Dieudonné Affair’.

Dieudonné M’bala M’bala, a mixed-race Cameroonian-Breton comedian from the affluent Parisian suburb of Fontenay aux Roses, had become France’s most successful comedian and a poster boy for the French anti-racist Left by the early 2000. In 2002, however, he suddenly changed tack. After a TV sketch where the comedian appeared on stage dressed as an Orthodox Jew and saluted ‘Heil Israel’,<sup>16</sup> he began a public trajectory based on anti-Semitic

rants that made fun of the Holocaust. These included the claim that the HIV epidemic in Africa had been a Mossad plot and the definition of Holocaust remembrance as ‘memorial pornography’. More to the point, Dieudonné portrayed himself as a descendant of slaves, whose goal was to expose an ongoing historical battle between Jews and blacks in France, most particularly for primacy in a memorial war. Dieudonné claimed that ‘the Zionist power in France will stop at nothing in depriving a part of the population of its *devoir de la mémoire*’,<sup>17</sup> adding ‘the Jewish lobby hates blacks [...] As the black man, in the collective subconscious, embodies suffering, the Jewish lobby cannot stand him, because it’s their business’.<sup>18</sup> This mix between ‘slaughtering holy cows’ and the focus on antisemitic conspiracy theories alienated him from mainstream press and the established Left at the same time as it helped increase his popularity as a self-proclaimed symbol of resistance. By 2010, Dieudonné had partnered up with Alain Soral, the far-right narcissist who focused on fighting the ‘Jewish enemy’.<sup>19</sup>

In the immediate context of the early 2000s, Dieudonné’s rants focused public attention on the growing movement to commemorate France’s responsibility for historical enslavement. As the press dedicated growing space to the memory of enslavement, like the *Nouvel Observateur*’s special issue on slavery on March 2005,<sup>20</sup> it also addressed the connection between commemorating slavery and the Holocaust. The magazine’s examination of the history of slavery as a reaction to Dieudonné suggested that the comedian’s polemics did more to raise mainstream interest in this aspect of French history than political mobilisation – and successes – within Caribbean communities. Furthermore, Dieudonné did not appropriate the issue of slavery from the vantage point of Caribbean activists who used its memory to approach their historical belonging to France, but as a representative of a black France, who aimed to speak for the totality of its oppressed minorities against ‘Jewish conspiracies’. His growing support base, which at first included the popular comedian Jamel Debbouze who



praised Dieudonné's 'balls to say what we think',<sup>21</sup> validated the notion of Dieudonné as a phenomenon of the 'suburbs'. The simultaneous focus on resentment within the suburbs to a supposed 'memorial primacy' of the Holocaust fuelled an idea that Jews were in a competition for state recognition against the rest of France's racialised minorities. This logic relied on the notion that earlier successes of Jewish activists and the burgeoning acceptance of the necessity to acknowledge the responsibility of the French state for the fate of its Jewish citizens during the Second World War did not open up new avenues of discussion about the role of the state in the enslavement of Africans. On the contrary, they represented a preference of the state for Jews as a privileged community and exposed an element of 'two different yardsticks' towards France's underprivileged black community.<sup>22</sup>

This notion of battle between the memory of the Holocaust and that of slavery intensified through the Pétré-Grenouilleau controversy. The historian Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau held a post at the Université de Lorient when he published the work *Les traites négrières: Essai d'histoire globale* in 2004. The book, which received several awards, examined the transatlantic, Arab and Inner African slave-trading routes from a purely economic perspective.<sup>23</sup> In June 2005, however, in an interview to the *Journal du Dimanche*, Pétré-Grenouilleau replied to a question about antisemitism in the black community following the Dieudonné Affair:

That is [...] the problem with the Taubira Law, which considers the enslavement of black people by Europeans as a 'crime against humanity', implicitly including a comparison with the Shoah. The Atlantic slave trade is not a genocide [...] The Jewish genocide and the Atlantic slave trade are different processes. There is no Richter Scale for suffering.<sup>24</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the organisation *Collectif des Antillais Guyanais-Réunionais* filed a representative lawsuit against the historian for denying the Taubira Law's characterisation of the Atlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity.<sup>25</sup> Pétré-Grenouilleau found himself in the centre of a public controversy he had not anticipated, as the academic world quickly rallied behind to protest the lawsuit. Following these reactions, the Collectif DOM withdrew the lawsuit in 2006.<sup>26</sup> However, the controversy left its mark on the debate, especially due to the aggression Pétré-Grenouilleau experienced from men and women who were offended by the interview. Various websites denounced Pétré-Grenouilleau as a racist and an 'accomplice of slave traders', or sent threats to his workplace.<sup>27</sup> He received insults and threats on his doorstep.<sup>28</sup> In a later interview with *Libération*, Pétré-Grenouilleau mainly expressed puzzlement at the unexpected virulence of the attacks, as 'until the last few months, the history of the slave trade hardly interested anyone, at least in France'.<sup>29</sup> This controversy validated the nascent image of a 'memory war' between minority communities that opposed two incompatible memories and pitted Jewish activists and members of other minority communities on different sides of the divide. When the *Indigènes de la République* emerged, they reacted to this context as the organisation quickly became a leading actor in any debate about the recognition of colonial history's legacies in contemporary France.

### **The *Indigènes de la République* and the Colonial Republic**

The organisation *Les Indigènes de la République* was founded in 2005 by a group of activists of Maghrebi origin from the fringes of the French Left as a reaction to what the organisation's founders perceived as the participation of anti-racism and the French left in the structures of the Republic. The three primary initiators of the project, the recent university graduate Houria Bouteldja, the pro-Palestinian activist Youssouf Boussoumah and the Tunisian former Trotskyist Sadri Khiari, met in 2003 through campaigning against the law that prohibited wearing 'ostentatious symbols of religion in public spaces', most notably in

schools. All three activists were dismayed by what they perceived as the implication of the 'do-gooding republican left' in the racist undertones of the headscarf debate. The three began recruiting members in their activist networks, and in January 2005 published their manifesto, which has since become well known for its call to 'decolonise the Republic'.<sup>30</sup>

In their critique of republican anti-racism, the group lumped together diverse organisations that had emerged in different moments and that had different strategies. These included established organisations such as the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* (LDH) or the *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples* (MRAP), but also newer arrivals such as the *Mouvement des immigrations et banlieues* (MIB). These organisations all had different structures and forms of mobilisation, but all sought to build influence through campaigns and lobbying to influence government and local policy. In so doing, not only were they 'institutionalised' and therefore relied on cooperation with the state, but they adopted a republican discourse, in which the goal of anti-racism was to assert the value of 'colour-blind' French citizenship for all regardless of their origin.<sup>31</sup> In this vein, these organisations prioritised fighting expressions of racism in France over the discussion of race and its influence on republican structures. On the level of discourse, anti-racism therefore promoted the idea of cross-community cooperation while resisting the assertion of group particularisms to avoid the charge of *communautarisme*. The *Indigènes*' founders particularly resented the organisation *SOS-racisme*, which was founded in the 1980s and used high profile events and campaigns to promote a 'feel-good' anti-racism that focused on multi-ethnic cohesion. The new organisation's arrival was an attempt to challenge the image of anti-racism as 'inclusive' and create an actor to represent the 'indigenised' postcolonial minorities in France.<sup>32</sup> The *Indigènes* did not seek to emulate the methods and strategies of French anti-racism, but to establish their presence as a corrective. However, the exact goals of this corrective, in the

same vein as the meaning of the organisation's call to 'decolonise the republic', remained vague at best.

The moment in which the *Indigènes* appeared was propitious for a new voice that mobilised colonial history to make sense of contemporary racism. As 2005 unfolded, debates about France's colonial legacy mushroomed as the public engaged with Dieudonné, the 23 February Law's fourth article on the positive role of French colonialism and the October riots in the suburbs.<sup>33</sup> While the *Indigènes* did not lead any of these debates, in fact in November 2005 the quick development of the riots outpaced their capacity for engagement, the mainstream media kept referring to them in the role of token agitators.<sup>34</sup> Many on the conservative right as well as on the anti-racist left continuously denounced them as dangerous *communautaristes* out to sabotage Republican cohesion and lead to the creation of American-style racial particularisms, therefore keeping them an audible voice beyond their actual activist capacity. Indeed, their impact on the ground has been minimal.<sup>35</sup> In the heyday of *Indigène* mobilisation, in 2008, they may have had just about a few hundred active members. This number has since decreased to a few dozen.<sup>36</sup> The organisation therefore lacked the manpower or the skills to organise its 'base' like other traditional anti-racist organisations. Unlike more professionalised organisations like the MIB, it did not create structures on the ground to mobilise followers in specific campaigns, which has always made it difficult to comment on their 'activist' strategies. On the other hand, their visibility – through attention from others that was fuelled through their own media strategy – has given them disproportionate influence on the public discourse.

This quickly became the essence of a new kind of activism: rather than focusing on the specific demands of traditional anti-racist issues like housing or workplace discrimination, the organisation produced academic postcolonial analysis of 'colonial continuities' to explain France's contemporary malaise. The foregrounding of colonial history in explaining

republican racism enabled the *Indigènes* to bypass – and criticise – republican so-called colour blindness and address race as the main factor in contemporary French society. The novelty of this open thematisation of race, coupled with references to colonial imagery, assured the *Indigènes*' exposure. Subsequently, an organisation that would have otherwise remained on the margins of France's fragmented anti-racist scene was catapulted into the public eye through front-page coverage. In so doing, the organisation not only succeeded in injecting new ideas into the public conversation and keeping its voice heard in both mainstream and activist media, but also in establishing itself as an intellectual mouthpiece of a decolonial movement. This reflected one of the main contradictions in the organisation's trajectory. On the one hand, the *Indigènes* constantly repeated their commitment to a base of racialised and underprivileged postcolonial minorities. On the other, Jérémy Robine's initial characterisation of the organisation as a '*bac plus cinq*' club<sup>37</sup> conveyed a wide-ranging dismissal of the *Indigènes* as elitist academics, whose postcolonial analysis had little significance for the base they aimed to represent. Notwithstanding, this contradiction has enabled the organisation to survive in the public eye for over a decade as an actor who claimed to represent the French equivalent of Black Power (or Maghrebi Power) in the public sphere, often as what Houria Bouteldja called the articulate 'token Arabs'<sup>38</sup> in the media.

This achievement owed much to Houria Bouteldja's visible position in the forefront of the organisation. Out of the three initial main founders, the previously unpoliticised Bouteldja quickly became not only the main organisational power behind the organisation, but also its face in the media. From the very beginning, her interventions combined intellectual postcolonial analysis with a particularly colloquial style and targeted provocations. Her first foray into the waters of decolonial politics occurred after meeting Sadri Khiari in 2003, who encouraged her to analyse the headscarf debate through continuities of colonial paternalism that instrumentalised and sexualised Arab women in contemporary society. Bouteldja intoned

that contemporary republican discourse emulated colonial images of Arab men as ‘voleurs, voleurs et voileurs’ (rapists, thieves and veilers of women) and called on activists to adopt a ‘decolonial feminism’ that would express solidarity with racialised men against the interests of white feminism.<sup>39</sup> This first analysis laid the groundwork for Bouteldja’s style of activism thereafter. On the one hand, she mobilised colonial imageries to make sense of the present, prioritise racial critique over other avenues, and defend racialised minorities against any critique from the ‘white establishment’. She articulated her position through a vocabulary that showed awareness of anglophone discussions of intersectionality, and with it her own position as a racialised woman.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the particular style of her interventions, which combined lengthy think-pieces and provocative media appearances, later came to define the image of the *Indigènes* in the public eye. In both her writing and in person, she oscillated between academic precision and crudely colloquial formulations. These included the terms ‘*blanchité*’ (best translated as ‘whitishness’) or ‘*souchiens*’ (original French), which transposed anglophone academic preoccupations with race into a colloquially raw French register. Another of her successful inventions was the harnessing of the term ‘*indigènes*’, which not only raised interest, but also conveyed the organisation’s preoccupation with colonial continuities and the representation of the suburbs in contemporary France. Bouteldja’s use of colloquialisms to theorise France’s postcolonial predicament not only helped her to a wider audience, but also reflected an attempt to square the circle between intellectual discourse and appeal to the ‘base’. In so doing, she was able to claim (publicly at the very least) that she was not a member of the white intellectual establishment, but that her language reflected her personal experience as a ‘victim of white oppression.’<sup>41</sup> This language was one component of Bouteldja’s claim that the *Indigènes*’ strategy was to address only issues that ‘mattered’ to its base, which she identified as solidarity with Palestine, state racism and police crime.<sup>42</sup>

As an organisation that sought to represent the minorities of the suburbs in a debate about France's colonial history, the media perceived the *Indigènes* as an actor in the nascent 'memory wars'. This was not just the effect of media coverage, as the relation to Jews and antisemitism engaged the organisation from the very beginning. For once, the debate about antisemitism and its place in the suburbs was one of the main catalysts for the organisation's foundation. If the founding members of the *Indigènes* met through mobilisation against the headscarf law in 2003, the one event that Bouteldja later called the 'last straw'<sup>43</sup> that demonstrated the necessity of a new anti-racist organisation that required a 'qualitative leap of anti-racism',<sup>44</sup> was the 'RER-D affair' in July 2004: Marie, a young woman had reported being attacked in the RER by a group of teenagers of Maghrebi origin, who had called her a filthy Jew, pushed over her pram with her baby inside, cut her hair and painted swastikas over her cheeks and belly with a glow-marker. The mainstream media was outraged and the entire political elite was quick to condemn the crime, which Marie reported just after another case had illustrated the recent rise of antisemitism, and with it the sense of conflict, in the suburbs: a young Jew, Ilan Halimi, had been kidnapped, tortured and left to die by a gang who had targeted him because 'a Jew is rich'.<sup>45</sup> In Marie's story, however, the facts did not add up and the young woman admitted she had concocted the story to get attention. Media coverage, on the other hand, did not change after this revelation. Both politicians and pundits kept on insisting that the public outrage had been justified because Marie's story had been so believably 'of its time'.<sup>46</sup> This, however, only fuelled Bouteldja's critique: the media not only portrayed young Maghrebi men as inherently violent to women, but also antisemitic. Countering this allegation became an ever-growing priority for Bouteldja.

To this end, however, the organisation encountered two initial barriers in speaking about antisemitism. Firstly, the *Indigènes de la République's* uncompromising relationship with Zionism made it a target by many Jewish actors. The organisation claimed to be an anti-

Zionist voice that represented pro-Palestinian movements in France and perceived the State of Israel as a colonial evil and Israelis as targets for justified anti-colonial violence. While the organisation did organise less than a handful of individual anti-Zionist Jewish members, most notably the lawyer Laurent Lévy,<sup>47</sup> and eventually gained the support of organisations such as the *Union juive française pour la paix*<sup>48</sup>, its interpretation of Palestinian solidarity made conversation with Jewish actors difficult. Here, the singling out of Israel as the enemy, together with calls on Jews to disown Zionism not only infuriated the largely pro-Israel French-Jewish representative organs, but also alienated Jewish voices that were otherwise critical of Israel, and exasperated Jewish men and women who were more concerned about French Jewishness rather than relations to Israel. As a result, the central position the *Indigènes* assigned to Palestinian solidarity meant that conversations about the organisation's relationship to antisemitism – and to Jews – often began and ended with Israel.

Secondly, Bouteldja claimed to represent the true voice of the 'population of colonial origin'<sup>49</sup> and refused any white criticism of these. Nonetheless, this position became less and less tenable as the Jewish-Arab relationship in France became more vocally conflictual<sup>50</sup> and the phenomenon of antisemitism in the *banlieues* – and particularly the link between anti-Zionism and antisemitism – came under closer scrutiny by the media. Bouteldja then invested more energy in squaring the circle on antisemitism, particularly as she was repeatedly confronted with the need to position the *Indigènes'* anti-Zionism vis-à-vis the rise and rise of Dieudonné with its base.

For Bouteldja and the *Indigènes*, Dieudonné was an unavoidable reference. His soaring popularity, particularly among *jeunes de banlieues*, attracted the press and drew attention to the growth of antisemitism amongst racialised minorities. Moreover, as he drew attention to the link between the history – and memory – of slavery and contemporary identities and racism, Dieudonné occupied the same spot as the *Indigènes*. For the media, the connection



between the two was inevitable, as the first mainstream reactions to the *Indigènes*' manifesto showed. While it was published in January 2005, the first attention to the organisation emerged in reaction to Dieudonné's visit to Algeria at the end of February and his comments that 'we [black citizens] do not have the same rights as Zionists. They, at school, it's enough that a child gets called a dirty Jew for everyone to rise up. For me, Zionism is the Aids of Judaism'.<sup>51</sup> As commentators rallied to denounce the comedian, they used the example of the *Indigènes* as the latest arrival of a 'communautariste' organisation that embodied the dangers of mobilising the memory of the past for the sake of 'victimisation'.<sup>52</sup>

The subject of Dieudonné kept intruding into the *Indigènes*' interactions with the media. Interviews always returned to the question of the *Indigènes*' position as a kind of Litmus Test set to devise whether they truly rejected antisemitism. For interviewers, denouncing Dieudonné's relentless focus on the Shoah and Jewish communities was a clear choice, yet Bouteldja often preferred to avoid the subject. Attacking Dieudonné would have alienated the *Indigènes*' base and been perceived as allying with the 'establishment' against a voice of 'resistance'. Only when Dieudonné paired up with Soral and joined the ranks of the far-right did Bouteldja begin searching for ways to criticise his choices. Here, her answers were usually contradictory along the lines of: 'I love Dieudonné; I love him just as the *Indigènes* [here: racialised minorities in France] love him. I love him because he did something important in terms of dignity, [...] he refused to be a token domesticated negro. Even if he did not have the right political software in his head, he has an attitude of resistance'.<sup>53</sup> In the same vein, she would then continue and suggest that antisemitism was a 'European practice' that Dieudonné, as a racialised man, could not fully adopt and therefore could not be accused of. Even though Bouteldja spoke of Dieudonné's alliance with the far-right as dangerous, she could not bring herself to 'succumb to white pressures' and condemn what she perceived as the 'act of dignity' that Dieudonné represented.<sup>54</sup> As Dieudonné forced Bouteldja to address

antisemitism, she did so initially from the position of the defender of France's racial minorities against white criticism.

### *Speaking of Antisemitism after Dieudonné*

The Dieudonné Affair left the *Indigènes* convinced that they had been unjustly treated by the Republican left due to their refusal to disown him as a symbol of resistance.<sup>55</sup> As a result, they increasingly focused on Jews and antisemitism in their interventions. These mostly appropriated anti-Zionism positively while claiming that the increased focus on left-wing antisemitism was a Zionist smear and a distraction from the real issue of French complicity in the Israeli occupation of Palestine.<sup>56</sup> In so doing, they followed a generally well-trodden path, in which commentators often tried to completely separate anti-Zionism – as an anti-racist and anti-imperial concept – from antisemitism, as a form of European racism.<sup>57</sup> Houria Bouteldja, however, saw the Dieudonné affair through the lens of colonial continuities. For her, the left's focus on Dieudonné was a neo-colonial attempt to drive a wedge between French mainly North African Jewish community and France's *population issue de la colonisation*, who, through their common origins, would otherwise have been natural partners for the *Indigènes'* project of decolonial liberation. Bouteldja believed, however, that Jewish refusal to acknowledge this only demonstrated acquiescence to French Republican manipulation through a form of what she began to call a 'state philosemitism' in diverse texts and media appearances.<sup>58</sup> This state philosemitism was supposedly demonstrated through the French state's embrace of the 'Jewish narrative' through acknowledgement of the importance of the Holocaust in French public space through commemoration. For Bouteldja, this was a ploy to convince Jews that they had a stake in France's Republican illusion, which became acutely visible with the success of Eric Zemmour's essay *Le suicide français* (The French Suicide) in 2014.

Zemmour, born in Montreuil to Jewish-Algerian parents, had made a name for himself as a conservative journalist and provocateur and established a reputation for lambasting defenders of progressive causes such as immigration, women and LGBTQ issues.<sup>59</sup> By the early 2010s, he landed in several judicial battles with anti-racist organisations – including the LICRA and the *Union des étudiants juifs de France* – and had gravitated ever closer to the *Front national*. The publication of *The French Suicide* demonstrated Zemmour's rapprochement to the far-right, as the essay addressed a perceived decline of France since 1968 and included a whole section that tried to rehabilitate the image of Vichy. The book argued that the French state had been weakened through 'derision, deconstruction and destruction' and most notably through the 'feminisation' and the 'halalisation' of the state.<sup>60</sup> As *Le Monde*'s Nicolas Truong did not fail to notice, these five hundred pages represented quite a usual lamentation on the 'decline [...] of the dominant white male'.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, as a growing number of unfavourable reviews criticised Zemmour's clear swing to the far-right, sales soared to make the book the most commercially successful publication of the year.<sup>62</sup> For Houria Bouteldja, Zemmour incarnated most of all the danger of Jewish faith in Republican assimilationism. For her, the main problem with Zemmour was not that he was a successful journalist who had published a successful far-right pamphlet, but that he was a Sephardic Jew who had succumbed to the temptation of believing that he had acquired enough privilege to disown his own Arab past.

In an interview, Bouteldja kept returning to Zemmour's trajectory as a representative sign of the 'danger' of Jewish belief in their '*blanchité*'.<sup>63</sup> Just a few months before, she had expressed this same sentiment, and the guiding principles of the *indigènes*' new position on antisemitism, in an open letter addressed to 'Eric Zemmour, the Israelite'.<sup>64</sup> This attack on Zemmour assumed a personal, irreverent tone to demonstrate Bouteldja's connection to the population of the suburbs whose voice she wished to channel. This was in opposition to

Zemmour, who, through his attempts to flatter the Republican conscience, had forgotten his ‘real’ position as a racialised subject in French society. Bouteldja personalised this analysis further, as she assured that she did not ‘blame’ Zemmour for his ‘assimilationism’ due to the ‘virulence of antisemitism’. Rather, she concluded that his Islamophobia was but a projection of his own sense of shame and resentment at the ‘resistance’ that Muslim immigrants represent:

You resent us for resisting the assimilationism that the Republic subjects us to while you and your family have succumbed to it [...]. Our headscarves, our ostentatious beards, our mosques, our halal meats remind you too much of the identity sacrifice which you needed to subject yourself to. [...] Like every other mercenary, you have always led the crusades against us.<sup>65</sup>

Importantly, Bouteldja approached Zemmour not only as a Jew, but specifically as an Algerian Jew, as ‘to make everything worse, not only are you Jewish, but also Arab (or Berber, but that’s the same) [...] you did not even have the luck of being born Aryan!’<sup>66</sup> In this context, Bouteldja’s personal focus on Zemmour – unlike for example Alain Finkielkraut, whom she treated as a ‘reactionary’ political opponent<sup>67</sup> – resulted from a perception of France’s Sephardic Jewish community as fellow postcolonial subjects and therefore actors in the *Indigènes*’ ‘decolonial project’. While Ashkenazi Jews, whom she qualified as Zemmour’s ‘cousins’, were a part of a European story, Sephardic Jews were a part of colonial continuities that formed the core of Bouteldja’s analysis of contemporary France. As a result, the *Indigènes*’ spokesperson became increasingly preoccupied with the relationship between France’s Jews and its other postcolonial minorities. Her articulation of this relationship did not reflect a desire to work with existing actors to assuage tensions between Jewish and Maghrebi communities in France, but to present a blueprint for the

refashioning of racialised society in 21<sup>st</sup>-century France. In 2016, Bouteldja articulated her ideas in a small booklet called *Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous: Vers une politique de l'amour révolutionnaire*.<sup>68</sup> The book was structured as a lengthy - and often confused - manifesto, written in the first person. Like most of her work, the tone was provocative, oscillating between intellectual references and colloquialisms. In the book's opening, Bouteldja introduced her argument as a personal one. She wrote as a 'victim of white oppression' to address the rise of fascism in a changing world. Her answer was a call for 'peace and revolutionary love' that would unite France's Jews and other minorities as a 'decolonial we of immigration'.<sup>69</sup>

Bouteldja identified an alliance between Jews and the French state as the main problem of France's postcolonial malaise. This supposed alliance was embodied through the French state's increased embrace of the commemoration of the Holocaust. For Bouteldja, however, the Shoah was but a double distraction from the real issue. Firstly, she qualified the Holocaust as a 'non-issue' for citizens of the 'global south', including herself and France's postcolonial immigrants. Here, she praised the example of Jean Genet, who 'couldn't give a damn about Hitler.'<sup>70</sup> Secondly, citing Césaire, she claimed that the main problem with the Holocaust was its claim for uniqueness, while it was but 'colonial methods' used on a white population. In France, she continued, the focus on Jewish suffering not only diverted attention away from plight of colonial minorities, but made Jews believe they were accepted into the Republican state narrative.<sup>71</sup> Jewish forgetting of their previous status of 'not quite white', she insisted, was the main barrier separating France's Jewish and Arab populations and facilitated the creation of a neo-colonial image of Arabs as inherently anti-Semitic. Jews, she claimed, were a community simultaneously marked by a history of resistance to the violence of Republican assimilationism as 'wandering Jews' and a present of caving in to the temptations of Republicanism and Zionism. At the core, however, she contended that 'to me

you are simultaneously familiar and foreign. Familiar because you are insoluble non-whites in the anti-Semitic *blanchité*, but foreign because whitened, integrated into the superior echelon of racial hierarchy.’<sup>72</sup>

Simultaneously, Bouteldja’s focus on the racial aspect of Jewish belonging in France perpetuated the logic of the so-called ‘memory wars’, re-articulating contemporary social conflicts through the vocabulary of history and memory. This historical logic explains Bouteldja’s choice to address only Sephardic Jews as actors in the same colonial continuities that underlie the *Indigènes*’ reading of race in contemporary France. While her letter to Zemmour stressed Republican complicity in the ‘Vichyite parenthesis,’<sup>73</sup> *Les blancs, les juifs et nous* portrays Jews as postcolonial subjects. Here, the supposed Republican embrace of Holocaust remembrance had created a Republican Jewish identity that transcended Ashkenazi-Sephardic lines, but simultaneously, just like the Crémieux Decree, made Sephardic Jews believe they were beyond hierarchies of colonial rule and its legacies. Succumbing to the Republican temptation, she added (or, as she believes, to the illusion that Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews shared the same history<sup>74</sup>), was in fact an illusion that Jews received special treatment, while ‘actually, yes, you have been chosen, by the West. To [...] solve the crisis of the white world’s moral legitimacy [...] and subcontract Republican racism’.<sup>75</sup> This, she continued, made them forget that ‘antisemitism is European. It is a product of modernity,’<sup>76</sup> and that accordingly, by definition, immigrants *issus de la colonisation* cannot be anti-Semitic.

In this context, Bouteldja suggested that the solution to the conflict was peace on ‘decolonial’ terms that would serve as a bulwark against the rise of the far-right.<sup>77</sup> While a main bulk of her argument of what ‘decolonial’ meant focused on a call on French Jews to disown Zionism, which Bouteldja had often formulated before, the novelty of her argument consisted in the role of Jewish racialisation in the relationship between Jews and other minorities. This

status as a racialised minority despite itself led to the declaration that ‘between us, everything remains possible’.<sup>78</sup> This ‘everything’, or the offer of ‘peace’, relied on Bouteldja’s reading of France’s history along the lines of colonial continuities. Her ideal was to create a pact of ‘decolonised minorities’ against Western domination: ‘you are still in the ghetto. But what if we left it together?’<sup>79</sup> This, however, would only be based on Jewish renunciation of the memory of the Holocaust as a unique event and disowning their connection to Israel.

Many on the Left and Right alike criticised the book as yet another provocation by the heavily mediatised *Indigènes*. ‘Bouteldja’s world is simple’,<sup>80</sup> began Serge Halimi in *Le Monde diplomatique*, and expressed the overriding sentiment of critiques who deplored Bouteldja’s ‘amalgamation’ and simplification of antisemitism. On the one hand, this reflects a common knee-jerk reaction of many male commentators who began by discrediting Bouteldja’s thinking as ‘simplistic’ and ‘unserious’. Simultaneously, while many critics sought to uncover the fallacies and inconsistencies in Bouteldja’s text,<sup>81</sup> their focus often returned to Bouteldja’s ‘divisive’ ‘identitarian excess’<sup>82</sup> that prioritises the focus on race to strengthen ‘those who defy daily the spirit of enlightenment.’<sup>83</sup> These reactions repeated the usual accusations, claiming that Bouteldja was fuelling racism and antisemitism – and generally contributing to the general atmosphere of social conflict – through her use of references to the past. On the other hand, after the journalist Jean Birnbaum blamed decolonial anti-racism’s ‘militant use of notions like “race”’<sup>84</sup> for a malaise within the French Left, a group of twenty intellectuals published a manifesto in defence of Houria Bouteldja as a courageous thinker who dared to raise the issue of race in France.<sup>85</sup> This reflected the circular state of the debate over the so-called ‘memory wars’, in which conflicts between different minority groups were often reduced to the issue of the legitimacy of ‘race’ in the Republican sphere. Nonetheless, the *Indigènes*’ increased engagement with the issue of antisemitism and the ways to approach French Jews demonstrated the contradictions inherent

to the intersection of race and memory in the French discourse as well as to their position as an organisation that aimed to represent the voice of minorities in France's public space.

## **Conclusion**

The *Indigènes*' trajectory on antisemitism provides a privileged insight into the logic of 'memory wars' over a decade after the coining of the expression. When Bouteldja jokingly mentioned the *Indigènes* had become the 'token Arab' of the do-gooding French Left,<sup>86</sup> she was referring to the organisation's position in the public eye as the leading actor in the debate on colonial memory. Yet here again, the vocabulary of memory and interpretation of the past were mainly a tool that enabled Bouteldja to address contemporary issues in France. While the term 'memory wars' meant nothing to Bouteldja, who would have dismissed it outright, she was aware of its context and knew her interventions affected the already toxic context in which different actors contrasted Holocaust remembrance with coming to terms with the France's colonial crimes.

The *Indigènes* and Bouteldja were torn between their goal to represent the *population issue de la colonisation* and outside pressures to tackle the issue of antisemitism in this very constituency, particularly after Mohammed Merah's shooting on the Jewish school in Toulouse in 2012 and the Hyper-cacher attack in Paris in 2015. For the *Indigènes*, this conflict was particularly acute, as they had based their criticism of the Republic on the denunciation of racial and colonial hierarchies in France. And yet, hierarchies lost their clear contours in a climate where violence against Jews by mainly Maghrebi peers was becoming a reality that was difficult to ignore, while the relative privilege of a large part of France's Jewish community separated it from many Maghrebi peers once again. Bouteldja used references to colonial history to square this circle and restore 'clarity' to her analysis of France's postcolonial society. While she acknowledged the growing conflict between Jews



and other minorities, she brandished antisemitism as a ‘European’ phenomenon and therefore intrinsically foreign to the *population issue de la colonisation*.

In the same vein, Bouteldja not only used the colonial template to speak of the issue of antisemitism in the suburbs, but also to articulate the future of the relationship between Jews and postcolonial minorities, and particularly Arabs, in France. In other words, if the conflict between Jews and Arabs in France can be articulated in colonial terms, so should its solution. Decolonial peace, however, remained characteristic of another one of the *Indigènes*’ contradictions, as the organisation often struggled to reconcile theory with lived experiences. In this case, even as Houria Bouteldja spoke of Jews, she kept referring to them as a near-mythical group defined by abstract notions rather than a real, diverse community. She rarely engaged with living Jews, and mainly addressed individuals like Eric Zemmour or Alain Finkielkraut. She used them as examples of the regressive streak of ‘Zionist’ politics in France and thus a demonstration of the danger of Jewish acceptance of Republican universalism. The question here is not whether the lack of engagement with the real experiences of Jews was ‘antisemitic’, as some of Bouteldja’s critics claimed, but to what extent the direct borrowing of academic theories of intersectionality helps the cause of anti-racism. On the level of academic analysis, Bouteldja’s analysis emerged from a logic of resistance to Republican structures and followed a coherent theoretical path. However, it struggled to reconcile the complexities of experiences in 21<sup>st</sup>-century France, where notions of belonging and conflict had developed and could no longer be explained solely through notions of historical – and colonial – continuities. The question remains how anti-racist activism can bridge the gap between Bouteldja’s analyses and mobilisation on the ground, or between the resistance of discourse and change on the terrain.

Beyond the many contradictions of Bouteldja’s analysis, the focus on the *Indigènes*’ attention to antisemitism and relationship with France’s Jewish community address the very position of

ethno-religious communities in France. Despite Bouteldja's lack of attention to Jewish lived experiences, her engagement with antisemitism is a reminder that the role of France's Jewish community – as a minority that struggles between racialisation and acceptance – is pivotal for the understanding of the articulation of race and whiteness in the fifth republic. Examining this contradictory Jewish position shifts the focus from Maud Mendel and Ethan Katz's works on Jewish-Muslim relations in France as between two religious communities.<sup>87</sup> It suggests that to understand changes in the Fifth Republic, more attention needs to be given to questions of Jewish racialisation – and with it to more diverse and contemporary Jewish voices – and its significance for the articulation of 'race' in 21<sup>st</sup>-century France.

In other words, just in the same way as the *Indigènes*' embrace of the vocabulary of memory presented a way to approach race in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century French republican landscape, Bouteldja's interventions about Jews and antisemitism raise an issue that is otherwise difficult to broach, namely that of Jewish racialisation in Europe. Despite broad generalisations and simplifications, Bouteldja addressed the position of French Jews as a community that shares a history of racialisation at the same time as it considers itself fully accepted into France's republican establishment. This fragile position relies on the articulation of contemporary Jewish – cultural and ethnic rather than religious – identities as inherently French. As the concept and vocabulary of 'whiteness' begin to appear ever more often in the French and broader European circumstance, this Jewish position on the margins of whiteness should receive broader scholarly attention. Questions about the role of memory and race in the articulation of modern Jewish identities can be raised with greater focus on the actions and words of Jewish actors from different sides of the cultural, religious and political spectrum.

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<sup>1</sup> The debates that prompted the emergence of the term followed the passing of the 23 February Law with its 4<sup>th</sup> article that prescribed school curricula to stress the ‘positive role’ of French overseas presence and with it the *pied-noir* community’s sense of resentment towards a perceived marginalisation of their narrative of suffering and victimhood. For an analysis of pied-noir memory and its links to Republican structures, see Eldridge, Claire, *From Empire to Exile: History and memory within the pied-noir and harki communities, 1962–2012* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> See Rothberg, Michael, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See Lotem, Itay, ‘Anti-racist activism and the memory of colonialism: race as Republican critique after 2005’, in: *Modern and Contemporary France*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2016, pp. 283-98.

<sup>4</sup> This idea of memory is most often associated with the work of Benjamin Stora - for example: Stora, Benjamin, *La gangrène et l’oubli* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991) - and the ACHAC working group - see for example: Bancel, Nicolas, Blanchard, Pascal and Lemaire, Sandrine (eds.), *La fracture coloniale: La société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the campaign to ‘come to terms’ with the memory of the Holocaust in France, see Rousso, Henry, *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1987). Probably the best-known activists who fought for the recognition of French responsibility in the crimes of the Holocaust are Serge and Beate Klarsfeld. Nonetheless, the term ‘Jewish activists’ is used here for a broad coalition of Jewish (mainly Ashkenazi) intellectuals and campaigners, who did not define Jewish belonging through religious affiliation, but through the legacy of the Holocaust and its persecution.

<sup>6</sup> For a theorisation of this memorial ‘cross-pollination’, see Rothberg, 2009 and Silverman, Max, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Anne Tristan became famous through her account of an undercover year as an activist of the Front national, which she published to help combat the party’s rise in the 1980s: Tristan, Anne, *Au Front*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1987). She later became one of the leading actors in the organisation *Au nom de la mémoire*, which struggled to raise awareness to the massacre of Algerians in Paris in October 1961. See for example House, Jim and MacMaster, Neil, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 297-9.

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<sup>8</sup> For more details about the court controversy, see House and MacMaster, 2006, pp. 311-12, but mainly Golsan, Richard, *The Papon Affair: Memory and Justice on Trial* (London: Routledge, 2000), and Thénault, Sylvie, *Le 17 octobre en question*, in: *Jean Jaurès Cahiers trimestriels*, 148, July-Sept, 1998, pp. 89-104.

<sup>9</sup> For the most recent work on the term *Devoir de mémoire*, see Ledoux, Sébastien, *Le devoir de mémoire: Une formule et son histoire* (Paris: CNRS, 2015)

<sup>10</sup> See Barcellini, Serge, 'L'Etat républicain, acteur de mémoire : des morts pour la France aux morts à cause de la France', in : Blanchard, Pascal and Veyrat-Masson, Isabelle (eds.) *Les guerres de mémoires: La France et son histoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008), pp. 209-20.

<sup>11</sup> See Chirac's speech republished on *Le Figaro's* <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2014/03/27/25001-20140327ARTFIG00092-le-discours-de-jacques-chirac-au-vel-d-hiv-en-1995.php> (last accessed 02.09.2017).

<sup>12</sup> JORF no. 0162, 14.07.1990:  
<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000532990&categorieLien=id> (last accessed 10.09.2017).

<sup>13</sup> Interview Serge Romana, President of the association CM98 with author, Paris 27.11.2014. See also Lotem, Itay, 'Between Resistance and the State: Caribbean Activism and the Invention of a National Memory of Slavery in France', in: *French Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 36, no. 2, Summer 2018, pp. 126-148.

<sup>14</sup> *Loi n° 2001-434 du 21 mai 2001 tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l'esclavage en tant que crime contre l'humanité* : <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000405369> (last accessed on 10.09.2017).

<sup>15</sup> See for example Benjamin Stora and Pascal Blanchard in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, no. 2144, 08.12.2005

<sup>16</sup> *On ne peut pas plaire à tout le monde*, *France 3*, 1.12.2003.

<sup>17</sup> *Echo d'Oran*, 17.02.2005

<sup>18</sup> *Blackmap*, 22.10.2002:

[http://web.archive.org/web/20021022134311/www.blackmap.com/contenus/art\\_culture/moment\\_dieudo.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20021022134311/www.blackmap.com/contenus/art_culture/moment_dieudo.htm)

<sup>19</sup> On the link between Dieudonné and Soral, see Albertini, Dominique and Doucet, David, *La Fachosphère* (Flammarion, 2016), pp. 98-102.

<sup>20</sup> *Nouvel Observateur*, 03.03.2005

<sup>21</sup> *Nouvel Observateur*, 03.03.2005 and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ol\\_-8cb\\_qPU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ol_-8cb_qPU)

<sup>22</sup> For the specific issue of 'memory parity' between the Antillean and Jewish communities, see Myriam

Cottias's remark during an interview about '*cette conviction qu'entre la mémoire de la communauté antillaise et*

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celle de la communauté juive [...] il y a un effet de deux poids, deux mesures', in: Interview Myriam Cottias, President of the CNMHE and Florence Alexis with author, Paris, 17.06.2014. On the link between the memory of slavery and blackness in France see Lotem, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> For academic criticism of the book, see for example Pap Ndiaye's review in *Critique internationale*, vol. 28, July-September 2005, pp. 201-5.

<sup>24</sup> *Journal du Dimanche*, 12.06.2005.

<sup>25</sup> *Libération*, 30.11.2005.

<sup>26</sup> *Libération*, 16.03.2006.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Vergès, Françoise, *La mémoire enchaînée: Questions sur l'esclavage* (Paris: Albin-Michel, 2006) p. 127.

<sup>29</sup> *Libération*, 16.03.2006.

<sup>30</sup> On the foundation of the organisation, see Robine, Jérémy, 'Les "Indigènes de la République": Nation et question postcoloniale. Territoires des enfants de l'immigration et rivalité de pouvoir', in: *Hérodote*, vol. 120, January 2006, pp. 118-48, Interview Houria Bouteldja with author, 24.11.2014 and Lotem, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of Republicanism and the ideal of a colour blind republic, see Hargreaves, Alec, *Multi-ethnic France: Immigration, culture, politics and society* (London, Routledge, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Bouteldja used the word *indigènes* generally to refer to the postcolonial racialised population of the suburbs. In this article, the capitalised *Indigènes* refers to the organisation, while the lower case version quotes Bouteldja when referring to racialised minorities in France.

<sup>33</sup> See Lotem, 2016 on the *Indigènes*' reactions to these three events.

<sup>34</sup> On this, see Robine, 2006, pp. 146-7.

<sup>35</sup> Beyond the transformation of the 'movement' into a political party in 2008, their most memorable protest action was the 2005 march on 8 May to commemorate the massacres in Sétif and Guelma. On earlier mobilisation, see Lotem, 2016, pp. 288-9.

<sup>36</sup> Interview Mehdi Meftah, *membre fondateur des Indigènes de la République*, with author, Créteil, 29.09.2014 and Segré, Ivan, 'Une indigène au visage pâle', in: *#lundimatin*, 30.03.2016, on: <https://lundi.am/Une-indigene-au-visage-pale>

<sup>37</sup> See Robine, 2006, p. 141.

<sup>38</sup> Interview Bouteldja with author, 24.11.2014.

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<sup>39</sup> Bouteldja, Houria, *De la cérémonie du dévoilement à Alger (1958) à Ni Putes Ni Soumises* :

*L'instrumentalisation coloniale et néo-coloniale de la cause des femmes*, October 2004, on:

[http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id\\_article=339](http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=339)

<sup>40</sup> There is far greater scope in analysing the gender aspect in Bouteldja's interventions and trajectory, not only as she has been involved in many debates about the use of the term intersectionality for the *Indigènes*' activism. For one analysis of gender and sexuality in the organisation's trajectory, see Lotem, Itay, "'L'homosexualité? Ça n'existe pas en banlieue': The Indigènes de la République and Gay Marriage, between Intersectionality and Homophobia", forthcoming in *Modern and Contemporary France*, autumn 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Bouteldja, Houria, *Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous: Vers une politique de l'amour révolutionnaire* (Paris, La fabrique, 2016), p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> Interview Bouteldja with author, 24.11.2014.

<sup>43</sup> Robine, 2006, p. 124.

<sup>44</sup> Interview Mehdi Meftah with author, 29.09.2014.

<sup>45</sup> See *Le Monde*, 21.03.2006.

<sup>46</sup> See for example *Le Monde*, 11.07.2004 and *Le Figaro*, 12.07.2004 and 14.07.2004.

<sup>47</sup> The secularist Jewish lawyer was one of the early signatories of the *Indigènes*' manifesto. He became involved with the organisation through the case of his daughters, who had converted to Islam and insisted on donning the Hijab to school. On the case of the Lévy girls, see Scott, Joan *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), pp. 34-39.

<sup>48</sup> For example, the UJFP actively supported some of the initiatives of the *Indigènes* such as its *manifestation d'urgence pour la Palestine* in 2014: <http://indigenes-republique.fr/grande-manifestation-urgence-palestine/>

<sup>49</sup> Interview Houria Bouteldja with author, 26.11.2014. See also Bouteldja, Houria and Khiari, Sadri, *Il faut qu'on ait notre propre organisation*, in: Bouteldja, Houria and Khiari, Sadri (eds.), *Nous sommes les indigènes de la République*, (Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2012), p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> On the roots of the notion of Jewish-Muslim conflict in France see Mandel, 2014, particularly on the 1990s disillusionment of North-African Jewish activists and Muslim activists from France's experiment with pluriculturalism and the exacerbation of the conflict after the outbreak of the Second Intifada in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2000.

<sup>51</sup> *Le Monde*, 22.02.2005, p. 8.

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<sup>52</sup> See for example the President of the *Ligue de droits de l'Homme*, Michel Tubiana, who criticised the Indigènes' manifesto as '*on ne lutte pas contre la domination et les discriminations par la simplification ni par le simple rappel du passé*' in *ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> See Bouteldja, 2014 on <http://indigenes-republique.fr/dieudonne-au-prisme-de-la-gauche-blanche-ou-comment-penser-linternationalisme-domestique/>

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*. See also the press release from 2014: <http://indigenes-republique.fr/dieudonne-les-juifs-et-nous/>

<sup>55</sup> Interview Houria Bouteldja with author, 24.11.2014. See also the Indigènes' press release '*Dieudonné, les juifs et nous*': <http://indigenes-republique.fr/dieudonne-les-juifs-et-nous/> (last accessed : 10.10.2017).

<sup>56</sup> See for example Liebman, Marcel, *L'impossible amalgame*, 2009, on: <http://indigenes-republique.fr/antisemitisme-et-antisionisme/>. See also Houria Bouteldja's appearance on LCP, *ça vous regarde*, 22.10.2012.

<sup>57</sup> See for example Bouteldja's text '*Mohammed Merah et moi*', published in 2012 after the shooting at a Jewish school in Toulouse. In it, Bouteldja described Merah as a brother, a co-member of the same postcolonial community, who requires understanding as a person, but whose act did not participate in true anti-Zionist resistance. See <http://indigenes-republique.fr/mohamed-merah-et-moi/> (last accessed 04.10.2017).

<sup>58</sup> See Bouteldja's manifesto from 21.03.2015 <http://indigenes-republique.fr/non-aux-racismes-detat-non-au-philosemitisme-detat/> and a further piece from 11.02.2015 on: <http://indigenes-republique.fr/racisme-s-et-philosemitisme-detat-ou-comment-politiser-lantiracisme-en-france-3/>

<sup>59</sup> See for example *Libération*, 29.12.2014 for a lengthy portrait of Zemmour.

<sup>60</sup> Zemmour, Eric, *Le suicide français* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> *Le Monde*, 18.10.2014. the controversy over Zemmour's book was similar to Germany's 'literary success' of 2010, when former SPD politician Thilo Sarrazin bemoaned the exact same 'decline' in German society due to the same perceived growth of progressive ideas and immigration in a book with the nearly identical '*Deutschland schafft sich ab*' (Germany abolishes itself). On Sarrazin's success see *Der Spiegel*, 29.10.2010.

<sup>62</sup> *Le Figaro*, 08.10.2014.

<sup>63</sup> Interview Houria Bouteldja with author, 24.11.2014.

<sup>64</sup> See <http://indigenes-republique.fr/lettre-a-eric-zemmour-l-israelite-3/> (last accessed October 2017). The letter was also quickly republished on many left-wing French blogs.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*. Zemmour had previously called himself a '*juif d'origine berbère*', see *L'Express*, 11.03.2010.

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<sup>67</sup> See for example Bouteldja and Finkielkraut on *France 3*, Ce soir ou jamais, 05.12.2006. .

<sup>68</sup> Bouteldja, Houria, *Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous: Vers une politique de l'amour révolutionnaire* (Paris, La fabrique, 2016).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp 54-62.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>73</sup> See <http://indigenes-republique.fr/lettre-a-eric-zemmour-l-israelite-3/>

<sup>74</sup> The section 'Les juifs' begins with an anecdote about anti-Sephardic racism of Ashkenazi Jews, to make a point about speaking to Sephardic Jews only as brothers in arms untainted by European imperialism. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>75</sup> Bouteldja, 2016, p. 51.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>77</sup> Here, Bouteldja described the challenge of the far-right, yet did not go into much further detail. Through the context of Zemmour's connections to the *Front national* and the party's attempts to appeal to French Jews as their defenders against a 'Muslim threat', this can also be seen as a response to the menace of rising Jewish support for the far-right party. For a short account of the FN's campaign to appeal to French Jews, see Lotem, Itay, 'In a bid to detoxify the far right, Marine Le Pen wants to appeal to French Jews', in: *The Conversation*: <http://theconversation.com/in-a-bid-to-detoxify-the-far-right-marine-le-pen-wants-to-appeal-to-french-jews-73993> (last accessed 10.10.2017).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>80</sup> See *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 2016.

<sup>81</sup> See for example the Ivan Segré's popular blog post 'Une indigène au visage pâle' <https://lundi.am/Une-indigene-au-visage-pale> (last accessed 25.08.2017) or the *Mediapart*'s republication of Mélusine's blogpost <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/melusine-2/blog/200616/bouteldja-ses-soeurs-et-nous> (last accessed 26.09.2017)

<sup>82</sup> *Libération*, 24.05.2016.

<sup>83</sup> LICRA, Houria Bouteldja colonise la fac, accessible online on: <http://www.licra.org/houria-bouteldja-colonise-la-fac/> (last accessed 04.10.2017).

<sup>84</sup> *Le Monde*, 08.06.2017.



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<sup>85</sup> *Le Monde*, 19.06.2017.

<sup>86</sup> Interview Houria Bouteldja with author, 24.11.2014.

<sup>87</sup> See Mandel, Maud, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) and Katz, Ethan, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).